

Georgia



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 230,000
Percentage of total population	At least 5.3%
Start of current displacement situation	1992, 2008 (South Ossetia); 1994, 2008 (Abkhazia)
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	Undetermined
New displacement	Undetermined
Causes of displacement	International and internal armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations



People in Georgia have been displaced by several waves of conflict. Fighting which erupted in the early 1990s in South Ossetia was soon followed by conflict in Abkhazia. More recently in 2008, conflict broke out between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia. While negotiations continue, the conflicts are unresolved and their settlement remains elusive.

At the end of 2009, at least 220,000 people were displaced in Georgia proper, including up to 22,000 people displaced in 2008. There were also some 10,000 IDPs in South Ossetia and an unknown number in Abkhazia. By the end of the year, over 100,000 IDPs displaced in 2008 had returned to Abkhazia, South Ossetia and areas adjacent to South Ossetia. Around 45,000 people displaced in the 1990s, whom Georgia still counted as IDPs, had over the years returned to Gali district in Abkhazia.

The registration of IDPs displaced in 2008 started in spring 2009. At the end of the year almost 16,000 new IDPs had been registered and the process was continuing. These IDPs received one-off financial assistance and were automatically included in the state social assistance programme. Some IDPs who had lost documents or left them behind had been unable to register by the end of the year, and faced particular difficulty in accessing disability pensions and social support.

About 7,000 families displaced in 2008 were resettled to new villages and refurbished apartments during 2009. Living conditions and assistance provided in the new villages varied, but in general houses were poorly constructed with inadequate water and sewage systems. There were few jobs locally and some villages did not have schools or medical clinics, but their infrastructure was slowly developing.

Most IDPs and returnees have had to endure inadequate living conditions. In 2009, about half of all IDPs were living in private accommodation and information on their situation was scarce; the other half were living in collective centres which were mostly overcrowded and dilapidated non-residential buildings. Many returnees were living in damaged houses that they could not afford to repair, or still relying on the hospitality of relatives or friends.

In 2009 the government offered IDPs in some collective centres the chance to own their assigned space. This privatisation process also involved the renovation of some collective centres. By the end of the year, almost 7,000 families had signed purchase agreements. However, procedures varied,

information was limited and families did not always receive adequate living space or information about alternatives.

Many IDPs were still unemployed and dependent on benefits and assistance in 2009. IDPs had less access to formal jobs than others, as they continued to be excluded from local networks and often lacked skills that were in demand. Some had received land plots, but they were mostly small, often not very fertile and sometimes far from their homes. Many returnees in Abkhazia and areas near South Ossetia who had recovered their original land continued to struggle, with out-dated machinery and limited access to markets, to rebuild farming livelihoods in the face of insecurity and criminality.

Internally displaced children regularly attend school, though the quality of education is generally poor in Georgia. Problems include the lack of qualified teachers, run-down and ill-equipped schools, the cost of textbooks and school supplies and the lack of transport in some areas. Separate schooling continued for about 4,000 children attending 15 schools for IDPs in Georgia proper. Children who had returned to Abkhazia were mainly taught in Georgian, but there are few job opportunities for those who graduate without good Russian language skills.

Access to health care was difficult for IDPs, as out-of-pocket payments for medicines and special treatments not covered by state health insurance forced many to let illnesses go untreated or else fall into debt. There were few medical clinics and personnel in new settlements and the continuing need for psychosocial assistance was not met. In Abkhazia and South Ossetia, medical services were generally inadequate.

In 2009 the government adopted a revised action plan to implement its strategy for IDPs, which contained measures for all internally displaced populations and aimed to provide housing, promote socio-economic integration and inform people about decisions affecting them. Programmes to promote the last two aims had yet to be enacted.

IDPs continued to receive assistance from numerous international organisations, but while some continued to provide assistance in Abkhazia, most humanitarian agencies could still not access South Ossetia from Georgia proper. The end of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia and the closure of the Georgian mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) drastically reduced the international presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.